



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State Library

George Fingold Library

State House, Boston, Mass. 02133



312066 0278 1082 4

Researching Initiatives and Referenda at
the State Library of Massachusetts

Compiled by the Legislative Reference Staff
 of the State Library of Massachusetts

There are two distinct ways in which citizens of the Commonwealth may access Massachusetts state government : the Initiative and the Referendum.

The Initiative process is one by which individuals may propose an amendment to the state Constitution or introduce a statute not enacted by the General Court.

The Referendum process is one by which individuals may attempt to repeal an existing law, or give their opinions regarding public policy to their elected representatives.

The Massachusetts Constitution sets out the details of these procedures, and specifies those subjects which are excluded from consideration by Initiative or Referendum. See Articles XLVIII, LXXXI and other sections of the Massachusetts Constitution for further details on these subjects.

This pamphlet includes a short bibliography on the topic of Initiatives and Referenda, and two charts which outline some of the details pertaining to these two distinct procedures.

Initiatives and Referenda

A Selected Bibliography Prepared By
the Staff of the State Library of Massachusetts

Benenson, Robert. "Initiatives and Referendums"
Editorial Research Reports (October 22, 1982) : 775 -
792. (Ref/H/35/.E35)

Cronin, Thomas E. Direct Democracy: The Politics of
Initiative, Referendum and Recall. Cambridge : Harvard University
Press, 1989. (JF/493/.U6/C76/1989)

Levitan, Donald and Mariner, Elwyn E. "Accessing the
Government," Your Massachusetts Government. 10th ed. Newton
Centre, MA : Government Research Publications, 1984.
(QR/JS/451/.M45/L48/1984)

Magleby, David B. Direct Legislation: Voting on Ballot
Propositions in the United States. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins
University Press, 1984. (KF/4881/.M33/1984)

Massachusetts Legislative Research Council. Report Relative
to Revising Statewide Initiative and Referendum Provisions of the
Massachusetts Constitution. Boston : General Court,
1975. (House 5435 of 1975, Main Reading Room)

Moore, W. John. "Election Day Lawmaking." National Journal
(September 17, 1988) : 2296 - 2301. (Periodical Desk)

Reich, Kenneth. "The 64 - Million Dollar Question :
Initiatives are the Hottest Political Growth Industry - With
No End in Sight." Campaigns & Elections 9 (March / April
1989) : 15 - 18. (Periodical Desk)

Schmidt, David D., ed. Ballot Initiatives: History,
Research and Analysis of Recent Initiative and Referendum Campaigns.
Arlington, VA : Capitol Publications, Inc., 1984.
(JF/493/.U6/B34/1984)

Schmidt, David D., ed. Initiative Procedures : A Fifty-State
Survey. Arlington, VA : Capitol Publications, Inc., 1983.
(JF/493/.U6/I63/1983)

Zisk, Betty H. Money, Media, and the Grassroots : State
Ballot Issues and the Electoral Process. Newbury Park : Sage
Publications, 1987. (JK/1967/.Z57/1987)



INITIATIVE

	<u>Constitutional Amendment</u>	<u>Initiative Law</u>
<u>Petition</u>	10 qualified voters	same
<u>Signatures</u>	more than 3% of total number of votes cast for governor at preceding election	same
<u>To General Court</u>	before 2nd Wednesday in May	before 1st Wednesday in May
<u>Amended by General Court</u>	Yes, by vote of 3/4 of members voting	No
<u>Votes Needed</u>	1/4 of all elected members	None
<u>Pass Two Biennial Sessions</u>	Yes	No
<u>Additional Signatures</u>	No	Yes, 1/2 of 1% of votes cast for governor at preceding election
<u>Additional Amendments</u>	No	Yes, by majority of the ten original petitioners
<u>Election Votes Needed</u>	30% of total ballots cast, & by majority	same
<u>Effective Date</u>	upon final tabulation & determination of election results, see G.L. 54 s. 115	30 days after election, or as provided in such law



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

<https://archive.org/details/researchinginiti00stat>

REFERENDUM

	<u>Law</u> (Repeal or immediate suspension & subsequent repeal)	<u>Emergency</u> <u>Law</u> (Repeal only, no suspension allowed)	<u>Public</u> <u>Policy</u> <u>Questions</u>
<u>Petition</u>	10 qualified voters	same	application, not petition
<u>Signatures</u>	1 1/2 % of total vote cast for governor at preceding election for <u>repeal</u> , 2 % of same for <u>suspension</u> etc.	same (repeal)	200 for House district, 1200 for Senate district
<u>File</u> <u>Within</u>	not later than 90 days after effective date	same	N/A
<u>To</u> <u>General</u> <u>Court</u>	No	No	No
<u>Election</u> <u>Votes</u> <u>Needed</u>	30 % of total number of ballots cast	same	none
<u>Binding</u>	Yes, automatic repeal 30 days after election	same	Not binding

(February 1990)

